

Michigan Lodging & Tourism Association

Testimony against

HB 5623

House Education Committee

December 3, 2009

- I. The Michigan Lodging and Tourism Association respectfully opposes HB 5623 due to language which would reverse Michigan law which requires all schools to start after Labor Day. Voters overwhelmingly supported that change.

II. Michigan's Tourism Industry

I'd like to express appreciation for last year's funding of \$30 million dollars which enabled Travel Michigan to expand the Pure Michigan campaign into a year-round, nationwide. Unfortunately due to legislative inaction thus far this session, that funding will be cut by over 83% to just \$5.4 million. If that occurs, the state of Michigan will just have wasted \$30 million in taxpayer dollars.

Background on Michigan's Post Labor Day School Law

Please allow me to summarize why this law, originally passed in 2005 has been so beneficial to our industry and Michigan's economy.

- III. "Race to the Top" does not include elimination of the Post Labor Day School start for Michigan or any other state. In fact, I took the time to do a word search of the 26 page document entitled "Race to the Top Program – Guidance and Frequently Asked

Questions.” I searched for and found absolutely no references in that document to the following phrases:

LONGER SCHOOL YEAR
YEAR-ROUND SCHOOL
EXPANDED SCHOOL SCHEDULE
EXPANDED SCHOOL YEAR
POST LABOR DAY SCHOOLS
LABOR DAY

So it is clear that State efforts to win funding from source have no bearing whatsoever on when Michigan schools start each year, nor is the idea of a year-round school year even a tangential determinant as to whether this or any state can earn such funding.

But let’s discuss that concept for just a moment. To the best of my knowledge only 18 states offer require students to attend school on a year-round basis. Most seem to offer multiple breaks or vacations for students and their families. There may be some who would contend this might help tourism. Such is not the case.

Given Michigan’s cool to cold climate in three of our seasons, those families that might opt for vacation during cooler months almost certainly would travel to states with warmer climates. So you’d be exporting tourism to other states. Plus, parents have limited amounts of vacation time, and in today’s economy it is highly unlikely they afford to spend money on hotels, golf courses and other tourist activities four times per year. Operatively speaking, parents would have to arrange for child care

during the multiple “vacation breaks year round schools entail. Such a proposal would cost Michigan families more money at precisely the wrong time.

IV. Elimination of Post Labor Day Schools would dramatically harm Michigan’s Tourism Industry and is simply not necessary to meet the criterion in Race to the Top.

There are multiple ways for Michigan to qualify for grants under this federal program, all of which are already stipulated in the bill before you.

V. Allowing Districts to Opt Out of Post Labor Day Schools

There are some who have proposed an “opt out” provision as a possible compromise. Please make no mistake, this is not a compromise, it is simply another means by which to reverse a law which has increased the amount of vacation time to Michigan families, and has allowed Michigan’s tourism industry to generate desperately need jobs and increased tax revenues during one of the worst economic downturns in Michigan history.

For these reasons we ask for your support in striking any reference to the elimination of Michigan’s Post Labor day School law in HB 5623, or in failing to do that, we respectfully ask for your vote against this legislation.

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